

*Omnibus bill protects foreign worker loophole at the expense of Oregonians* □ □

**WASHINGTON, DC--** U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) rejected H.R. 2055, an omnibus spending bill because it protects a loophole that allowed forestry contractors to hire underpaid foreign workers using stimulus dollars and deny jobs to Oregonians. DeFazio requested the Department of Labor close the loophole after discovering several local companies had hired foreign workers for federal contracts.

H.R. 2055 blocks efforts by the Department of Labor (DOL) to protect America workers by reforming the H2-B visa process and closing this egregious loophole.

A recent Office of Inspector General (IG) report found federal stimulus funds were awarded to contractors who underbid competition by using an H2-B loophole to hire foreign laborers. The DOL reform would have required all H2-B visa workers are paid the prevailing wage to avoid undercutting American workers.

“This should be a no brainer. Congress should have allowed the DOL to prohibit contractors from exploiting loopholes to undercut competition and use cheap foreign labor,” said DeFazio. “Instead, the interests of a special few trumped the interests of unemployed American workers. I could not support a bill that forbids the DOL from making common sense rule changes to protect American workers.”

DeFazio had asked for the IG review after the Bend Bulletin reported that several companies awarded Forest Service contracts, then filed H-2B applications to use foreign workers rather than Oregon workers. DeFazio sent a letter to the DOL, urging them to reform the H-2B visa program to ensure that taxpayer dollars intended to hire American workers are not used to hire foreign workers. DOL agreed and planned to change the rule.